

# **I Introduction**

This draft Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared on behalf of the City of Carlsbad in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This chapter outlines the purpose of and overall approach to the preparation of the Program EIR on the proposed City of Carlsbad General Plan Update and a new Climate Action Plan (collectively referred to as the “project” or “proposed General Plan”). The City of Carlsbad is the lead agency responsible for ensuring that the proposed General Plan complies with CEQA.

## **1.1 Purpose of this Program EIR**

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This Program EIR has three purposes:

- Satisfy CEQA requirements for analysis of environmental impacts by including a complete and comprehensive programmatic evaluation of the physical impacts of the proposed General Plan and its alternatives.
- Inform decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan prior to city decision-makers taking action on the proposed General Plan. The information presented in this Program EIR will assist city officials in reviewing and adopting the proposed General Plan.
- Provide a basis for the review of subsequent development projects and public improvements proposed within the planning area. Subsequent environmental documents may be tiered from the final Program EIR.

Pursuant to the provisions of CEQA and related case law, general plans and other programs must include analyses of the potential significant environmental impacts associated with implementation of their policies and proposals. CEQA is primarily intended to ensure that public agency decision-makers document and consider the environmental implications of their actions.

The proposed General Plan consists of policies, diagrams, and standards to guide the future development of the City of Carlsbad within its growth boundary, as described in Chapter 2: Project Description. As a “Program EIR” (see Section 1.2 for information on Program EIRs), this EIR contains analysis of the proposed General Plan and all potential environmental impacts expected to result from implementation of the various policies, programs, and projects identified, including those that serve to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. In accordance with CEQA requirements, this Program EIR also identifies and evaluates alternatives to the proposed General Plan, as well as analyzes the “No Project” alternative, which represents the

continued implementation of the current General Plan. An environmentally superior alternative is also identified as part of the alternatives analysis to inform decision-makers on this project.

This Program EIR represents the best effort to evaluate the proposed General Plan given its planning horizon through the year 2035. It can be anticipated that conditions will change; however, the assumptions used are the best available at the time of preparation and reflect existing knowledge of patterns of development.

## **EIR PROCESS**

The EIR process includes several steps: publication of a Notice of Preparation of an EIR (NOP); EIR public scoping meeting; publication of a draft EIR for public review and comment; preparation of responses to general public and other agency comments on the draft EIR; and certification of the final EIR.

The NOP for this Program EIR was published on December 29, 2010 (see Appendix A for the published NOP). The NOP and public comment period were advertised and a public scoping meeting was held January 17, 2011 to gather agency and public input on the scope and content of the EIR. One community member attended the scoping meeting. Written comments were also received during the public comment period (See Appendix A).

This draft Program EIR will be used by the public, elected officials, and city staff during the public review process. The final Program EIR, which will include responses to public comments received during the 45-day public comment period and incorporate the draft Program EIR by reference, will be certified by the City Council in conjunction with the proposed General Plan. The Planning Commission will also review the final Program EIR and forward to the City Council its recommendation on certification. Comments on this draft Program EIR should be in writing and submitted to:

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In several environmental issue areas, significant and unavoidable impacts remain after all feasible mitigation measures have been identified. If the City Council elects to proceed with the proposed General Plan despite these impacts, the City Council would be required to adopt a statement of overriding considerations with the adoption of the proposed General Plan. A statement of overriding considerations would explain how the benefits of the proposed General Plan would outweigh any significant impacts identified.

## 1.2 Approach to the Program EIR

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### APPROACH

This Program EIR evaluates the potential environmental impacts associated with complete build-out of the proposed General Plan. A “Program EIR” is defined in the CEQA Guidelines Section 15168 as:

*“...an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either: (1) geographically; (2) as logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions; (3) in connection with the issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program; or (4) as individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental impacts which can be mitigated in similar ways.”*

A Program EIR can be used as the basic, general environmental assessment for an overall program of actions/projects proposed over the planning period of a general plan (the proposed General Plan has a 21-year planning period with a horizon year of 2035). A Program EIR has several advantages. First, it provides a basic reference document to avoid unnecessary repetition of facts or analysis in subsequent project-specific assessments. Second, it allows the lead agency to look at the broad, citywide and regional impacts of a program of actions before its adoption and eliminates redundant or contradictory approaches to the consideration of regional and cumulative impacts.

As a Program EIR, this document focuses on the overall effects of the proposed General Plan in the planning area. Individual development projects will continue to require project level environmental assessment. The project-level environmental reviews will need to focus on project-scale impacts; cumulative and citywide impacts (such as air quality), may not need to be evaluated, provided projects are consistent with the General Plan and the data and assumptions used in this Program EIR remain current and valid.

The proposed General Plan and this Program EIR have been prepared concurrently, and the impacts analysis factors into policy development of the proposed General Plan. The proposed General Plan is intended to be self-mitigating, in that the policies and programs of the proposed General Plan are designed to mitigate environmental impacts. This Program EIR demonstrates how the impacts of future development in the planning area will be reduced or avoided through implementation of the policies and programs of the proposed General Plan. Any residual impact after implementation of these proposed policies and programs is measured against the significance criteria established for each impact area. The significance criteria are identifiable quantitative, qualitative, or performance level thresholds and are based on the suggested criteria provided in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, though they are tailored to be appropriate for the proposed General Plan.

## **APPLICABILITY**

As a Program EIR, this document focuses on the overall effects associated with adoption and implementation of the proposed General Plan. The analysis does not examine the effects of potential site-specific projects that may occur under the overall umbrella of the proposed General Plan in the future. When specific development proposals within the planning area are submitted to the city, the city will determine whether the environmental effects of the proposed projects have been adequately addressed by this Program EIR. If the city finds that the proposals would not result in any additional potentially significant adverse environmental impacts beyond those considered in this Program EIR, no new environmental analysis will be required. If the city determines that a project could create potentially significant adverse environmental impacts that have not been studied in this Program EIR, or if the city determines that environmental conditions have changed substantially since the Program EIR was prepared, the city may require further environmental review to determine appropriate revisions to the project, conditions of approval, or additional mitigation measures.

### **1.3 Scope of the Program EIR**

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Information gathered about the environmental setting is used to define relevant planning issues, determine thresholds of significance, and evaluate potential impacts. Based on the initial analysis of environmental setting and baseline conditions, and comments on the NOP, the following issues are analyzed in this Program EIR:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Energy, Greenhouse Gases, and Climate Change
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Historic, Archeological, and Paleontological Resources
- Hydrology, Water Quality and Flooding
- Land Use, Population and Housing
- Noise
- Public Services and Facilities (including recreation)
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Transportation and Traffic

## 1.4 Other Relevant Plans and Studies

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At an early stage in the General Plan Update process, several working papers were prepared to explore a range of planning topics, including many environmental topics. These working papers in some instances may contain information at a greater level of detail than in this draft Program EIR. The working papers are:

1. Sustainability
2. The Local Economy, Business Diversity, and Tourism
3. Open Space and the Natural Environment; Access to Recreation and Active, Healthy Lifestyles
4. History, the Arts and Cultural Resources; High Quality Education and Community Services
5. Walking, Biking, Public Transportation and Connectivity
6. Small Town Feel, Beach Community Character and Connectedness; Neighborhood Revitalization, Community Design and Livability

These documents can be viewed at: <http://www.carlsbadca.gov/envision>

## 1.5 Organization of the Program EIR

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This draft Program EIR is organized into the following chapters, plus appendices:

- Executive Summary.** The executive summary summarizes the Program EIR by providing an overview of the proposed General Plan, the potentially significant environmental impacts that could result from the proposed General Plan, the mitigation measures identified to reduce or avoid these impacts, alternatives to the proposed General Plan, and identification of the environmentally superior alternative.
1. **Introduction.** This chapter introduces the purpose for the Program EIR; explains the EIR process and intended uses of the Program EIR; the assumptions critical to the environmental analysis; and overall organization of this Program EIR.
  2. **Project Description.** This chapter includes a detailed description of the proposed General Plan, project location, objectives, and the General Plan Land Use Diagram.
  3. **Settings and Impact Analysis.** This chapter analyzes the environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan. Impacts are organized by major topic. Each topic area includes a description of the environmental setting, significance criteria, and impacts.
  4. **Analysis of Alternatives.** This chapter presents a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed General Plan, provides discussion of environmental impacts associated with each alternative, compares the relative impacts of each alternative to those of the proposed General Plan and other alternatives, discusses the relationship of each

alternative to the proposed General Plan objectives, and identifies the environmentally superior alternative.

5. **CEQA Required Conclusions.** This chapter provides a summary of significant environmental impacts, including growth-inducing, cumulative impacts; unavoidable significant effects; and irreversible effects.
6. **Bibliography.** A list of documents used during preparation of the Program EIR.
7. **Report Authors.** Identifies the Program EIR consultants and subconsultants, persons and organizations that contributed during the Program EIR preparation.

**Appendices.** Technical appendices include the NOP and compilation of agency and public comments received on the NOP, as well as other technical appendices related to traffic and cultural resources.